



TOWN OF TEWKSBURY BOARD OF HEALTH

Raymond Barry, Chairman
Charles Roux, Vice Chair
Kathleen Brothers, Clerk
George Ferdinand
Anthony Boschetti

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

MEETING MINUTES May 19, 2016

The meeting was called to order by Raymond Barry, Chairman, at 6:06 p.m. at the Tewksbury Town Hall. Present at the meeting were Charles Roux, Kathleen Brothers, and George Ferdinand. Also in attendance was Susan Sawyer, Board of Health Director.

Anthony Boschetti was not in attendance

Discussion:

Fall ballot question – legalization of marijuana in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts – Discussion led by Kathleen Brothers

Ms. Brothers read a document she drafted entitled “Legalization of Marijuana” aloud. The document discusses Ms. Brothers opposition to the legalization of marijuana and her reasoning’s. Ms. Brothers suggested the Board take a position on this matter.

LEGALIZATION OF MARIJUANA

“I was asked this past week to say a few words on the legalization of marijuana due to be on the ballot in November. Massachusetts decriminalized the drug in 2008 and legalized it in 2012 for medicinal purposes, but has Not allowed residents to use it recreationally. A Measure has been placed on the November ballot that would allow adults to possess up to 10 oz. Of marijuana inside their residences and grow up to six plants.

I want to say right off the bat that I realize that there is a generational gap between myself and others on the board. Some of you may feel much differently than I do about the subject of marijuana and about making it legal. I personally have voted no on all ballot questions concerning marijuana in the past. And as a warden at the polls I have seen with my own eyes the people who usually don't vote. Show up to vote when marijuana questions are on the ballot. If there is one thing that Massachusetts public Officials---democrat and republican, urban and Suburban, local and state ---seem to agree on lately. It's that the voters should not legalize marijuana at the polls this November. First, the governor, the mayor of Boston and the Attorney general (or,

apparently, their staffs) penned a joint letter advising not to legalize Marijuana. And after a visit to Colorado, were more convinced than ever not to legalize. What is Remarkable about this unified stand is that, by every metric available, public opinion appears to favor legalization, and by wider margins with each passing year. You cannot accuse lawmakers of governing according to the polls and public opinion, if anything, the opposite is happening here. In the last 16 years, there have been 85 ballot Questions in Massachusetts dealing with marijuana. All 85 passed! All but two of these were non-binding Public policy questions, in which the voters instruct The legislators how to vote on an issue. Two Binding referenda, now law, were the 2008 question decriminalizing marijuana (passed 65-35) and the 2012 Question legalizing medical marijuana (passed 63-37) the 2012 question passed in every community in the State, but two; the 2008 question passed in every Community but four. (the one "no" vote common to Both years was Lawrence, one of the most Hispanic cities in the state. National polls have found Latino voters more opposed to legalization than other Voters. And also Lawrence voters also leave ballot questions blank at a higher rate than any other city. Applying this rule of thumb to the current proposed question suggests the pro-legalization forces are in a good position. Some of this shift in MA, is due some to the generational replacement, where younger voters are more favorable to marijuana legalization and They replace older voters bit by bit. Instead, each generation is becoming steadily more favorable to the idea. Why am I so against the legalization of marijuana? Changes in marijuana policies legalizing marijuana for medical and or/recreational use suggest that marijuana is gaining greater acceptance in our society. So, I think it is particularly important for us on boards of health and public health to educate ourselves on what is known about the adverse effects linked to marijuana. And after these boards educate themselves on the effects of marijuana they can advise the public on making the correct decision when they go to the Polls in November. Maybe members will have pro/con thoughts on the subject but, I think not if they research and come to an educated opinion. Because marijuana impairs short-term memory and judgement and distorts perception, it can impair performance in school or at work and make it dangerous to drive an automobile. I am not speaking here of marijuana used for medicinal purposes because that is already law. I am speaking now about the legalization of 10 oz. of marijuana for recreational usage. I personally believe that marijuana is a gateway drug! Because a tolerance builds up, marijuana can lead users to consume stronger drugs to achieve the same high. When the effects start to wear off, the person may turn to more potent drugs to rid himself of the unwanted conditions that caused him to take marijuana in the first place. The drug (mj) masks the problem for a time (while the user is high). When the "high" fades, the problem, unwanted condition or situation returns more intensely than before. The user may then turn to stronger drugs since marijuana no longer "works." The vast majority of cocaine users (99.9%) began by first using a 'gateway drug' like marijuana cigarettes or alcohol. I am not saying all who smoke marijuana go on to use harder drugs. But Some do turn to harder drugs. One study found that youth (12 to 17 years old) who use marijuana are 85 times more likely to use cocaine than kids who do not use pot, and that of the kids who smoke pot before the age of 15, many move on to cocaine and now heroin. This is a quote from a boy named Christian...."I was given my first joint in the playground of my School. I am a heroin addict now, and I've just finished my eighth treatment for drug addiction." Let's hope that Christian finds peace and kicks his habit, but we all know that his chances are slim. For years, researchers have looked at a connection between marijuana and hard drugs, such as cocaine and heroin, said Lynn Fiellin, a study's

head author and an associate professor of medicine at Yale university school of medicine. But given the large number of people who abuse prescription drugs, particularly opioids (or painkillers) such as OxyContin and Percocet Fiellin said it seemed worthwhile to examine whether there was a link between marijuana and the use of these drugs. She went on to say that she didn't think that the general population has a good idea of how serious the problem is with prescription opioids. This is a true story about two teenage girls riding the school bus on their way home from school last week. They were offered (pot laced) brownies by a boy on the bus. (they said that they didn't know the Brownies contained pot). He said he had made them and urged them to take one. The girls said that they thought about not taking the brownies but after Being urged to take them they did. Well, the girls had an adverse reaction to the brownies they had increased heart rates and were having a hard time breathing. Their blood pressures also went up. They were taken to a hospital and are now Ok, but they are scared to death of going to school and riding On the bus. Of course, being teenagers they are being teased and taunted so badly that they want to leave school. So, do we really want more of this stuff going on? In my opinion, with the legalization of pot there will be more chances for kids to obtain the drug and use it, and do something like this, giving it to unknowing kids on the school bus. In Tewksbury, we have our drug czar Maria. I am sure that she and the police and school system are out straight with trying to keep the drug problem under control. Will the legalization of pot help or make their jobs more difficult? Something to think about.

My hope is to see that the legalization of marijuana does not pass on the ballot in November. Do you, as a board think that we should make a statement about the legalization of marijuana? At the very least should we have a discussion about the subject?

Prepared by Kathleen Brothers for Tewksbury Board of Health meeting held on May 19, 2016.

A footnote to my report:

You may or may not have seen on the news yesterday that they arraigned the man responsible for hitting and killing the state trooper out of the Charlton barracks about two months ago. At the arraignment it was stated that the suspect was driving under the influence of pot. He had... one hour before picked up his medical marijuana cigarettes. Four of them. They found partially smoked cigarettes in his car and also he tested positive for drugs. He was driving 81 mph when he crashed into the trooper and his cruiser, killing him. If this incident doesn't give evidence of the negative effects of smoking pot and driving a vehicle I don't know what does.

References:

Drug free world, national institute on drug abuse, WBUR news, Massachusetts-marijuana legalization, Channel 5 news. Boston Globe.”

Mr. Barry thanked Ms. Brothers for her input on this matter and explained that it is part of the Board’s responsibility to educate people on these types of issues.

Mr. Barry discussed a report issued by AAA regarding the increase of accidents due to marijuana use while driving. Mr. Ferdinand noted that he has a copy of the article from the newspaper that he would like to make a part of the record. Mr. Ferdinand suggested working with a regional group and, if passed, he would suggest the age be 21.

Approval of Meeting Minutes – April 21, 2016

Grammatical corrections were noted on Pages 2 and 5 of the April 21, 2016 meeting minutes.

MOTION: **Mr. Ferdinand made the motion to approve the April 21, 2016 meeting minutes as amended; seconded by Ms. Brothers and the motion carried 4-0.**

Continued Public Hearings: POSTPONED by request of the Applicant

Public Hearing to obtain a variance of the Tewksbury Board of Health regulations Chapter 7 Dumpsters. Property located at 875 East Street.

Applicant: Demoulas Super Markets, 875 East Street, Tewksbury, MA

New Business

Board of Health and Health Department goals and objectives

Mr. Barry read the 2015 goals and objectives aloud:

TBOH’s 2015 Goals and Objectives

- (As elected officials) To continue providing quality Health and Health related direction to the Town of Tewksbury
- Develop and maintain interdepartmental relationships to enhance TBOH vision across the community.
- Utilize cross-departmental resources to keep costs low while optimizing the town’s diverse knowledge pool.

- Grow partnerships with and promote groups and organizations that offer health and wellness activities and resources in the community.
- Gather resident input in order to address concerns and develop new ideas toward the common goal of bettering the life here in town.

Board of Health and Health Department goals and objectives

TBOH 2016 and beyond

Ms. Sawyer suggested continuing on with the 2015 goals and objectives into 2016 and possibly adding some additional goals. Ms. Sawyer explained that she has been on board with the Town for a few months now and has had the opportunity to listen to residents, board members, co-workers, etc., and it is her hopes that she has been working towards helping the Board achieve some of their goals.

Ms. Sawyer reviewed the 2015 goals above and explained ways in which she has worked towards helping achieve the goals and objectives, including:

- Continuing quality health - being visible, submitting articles and newsletters to the press, etc. Determining what the issues of the community are such as marijuana and working to streamline the processes.
- Interdepartmental department relationships – Ms. Sawyer explained that this is something that is always important as a newer staff member and noted that she has worked with the finance department, building department, engineering department, police, fire, etc. and they work well together on issues, local property upkeep, joint order letters, and processes with building permits where all departments review new applications. Ms. Sawyer noted that the Town Manager also holds weekly staff meetings where she primarily brings projects forward at these meetings. In addition, a shelter plan was worked on with Tewksbury Hospital. Ms. Sawyer noted that she is also attending larger regional group meetings including the Greater Lowell Health Alliance Subcommittee meeting on substance abuse and has also been working with the schools on the health of the children.

Mr. Barry thanked Mr. Roux for drafting the 2015 goals.

Mr. Roux discussed the importance of determining ways in which to execute the goals and objectives and suggested possibly working with other boards in town to achieve some of the goals. Mr. Roux used recreational marijuana use as an example. Mr. Barry agreed and noted that one of the ways he feels in which the Board can be more proactive is by establishing a 12 month period communication calendar to mark deadlines, important events, etc., to be able to plan ahead, and to work together with other groups.

Mr. Barry explained that at the two previous meetings he discussed the need to update the regulations. In doing this, Mr. Barry suggests establishing working groups comprised of no

more than 2 Board members and involve resident participation to receive input from the residents. Mr. Barry suggested creating working groups to research dumpsters and backyard chickens and noted that he feels there is a need to separate the chicken regulations from the general animal regulations as many people are not aware that chickens are included in this. Mr. Barry volunteered to participate on the working group for chickens and suggested inviting a resident opposed and a resident in favor to get a better understanding of the issue. Ms. Sawyer explained that the previous director had an intern last summer that did a great deal of research on this matter and noted that the town's public health nurse also has backyard chickens. Ms. Sawyer discussed the importance in communication to educate everyone on this issue.

Mr. Barry noted that Mr. Boschetti has also volunteered for the chicken working group. Mr. Ferdinand also volunteered and noted that he does not have chickens nor has he ever had neighbors with chickens. As a result, Mr. Ferdinand feels he could provide an unbiased opinion. Mr. Barry discussed the importance of resident involvement with the working groups.

Ms. Brothers noted that Ms. Sawyer stated that a great deal of work has already been done by Sara Kinghorn and others and suggested involving them in the group to include the research that has already been done.

Mr. Barry noted that the current regulations do not have a cap on the amount of animals and communities who do allow chickens allow a maximum number. Mr. Barry suggested the working group contain; 2 members of the community who are in favor of chickens and 2 who are opposed, Ms. Sawyer, the animal inspector, and two Board members.

Discussion took place on the role of the animal inspector

MOTION: Mr. Ferdinand made the motion to create a working group to research regulation suggestions on backyard chickens; seconded by Ms. Brothers and the motion unanimously carried 4-0.

MOTION: Mr. Ferdinand made the motion for a nine member working group to be comprised of two Board of Health members, two residents in favor of backyard chickens, two residents opposed to backyard chickens, Board of Health Director, Town Public Health Nurse, and the Animal Inspector; seconded by Ms. Brothers and the motion unanimously carried 4-0.

Ms. Sawyer noted that there is a resident present who would like to speak on this subject.

Jennifer Nagle came forward and noted that she has raised many animals including chickens and explained that she would like to do whatever she can to help. Ms. Nagle explained that this is also an area of concern for her as they have found abandoned chickens in a culvert near their farm. Ms. Nagle feels that not everyone should be allowed to keep chickens. Ms. Nagle noted that she has many suggestions including tagging the chickens so it is known which chicken belongs to whom.

Announcements

Ms. Brothers requested Ms. Sawyer provided an updated roster of the Board members.

Discussion took place on whether a July meeting is necessary. It was the consensus of the Board to allow the Chair to determine the need for a meeting in July.

Mr. Barry noted that he would like to have new binders that include the updated regulations.

Ms. Sawyer introduced the Health Department's new intern for the summer, Matina Tuladhar. Ms. Tuladhar, explained that she is currently working on her Master's Degree in public health at UMass Lowell and lives nearby in Dracut. She is happy to be working as an intern for the town. Ms. Sawyer explained that the position will be approximately 12 hours a week some at home and some out in the community. The Board welcomed and congratulated on her accomplishments to date.

Mr. Barry discussed awareness of the opioid issue and the realization that needs to be made that the folks that are overdosing or under the influence are not criminals. This is something that is now viewed as a medical condition. The State has undertaken a "State without StigMA" campaign and has a space for the name of the person and town they are from.

Adjourn

MOTION: Mr. Roux made the motion to adjourn at 8:15 p.m.; seconded by Ms. Brothers and the motion unanimously carried 5-0.

Approved: August 18, 2016